

AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 9, 2006 MEETING

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Opaluch, Everett Stuart, Kevin Nelson, Ken Ayars (for Bob Sutton), Dave Wallace, Jason Pezzullo

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT: Judy Bailey

STAFF PRESENT: Ken Ayars, DEM/Agriculture
Lis Peterman, DEM/Agriculture
Vicky Drew, USDA/NRCS

GUESTS: Peter and Linda Fenner, Fenner Farm, Charlestown
Jim Auckerman, So. County Conservancy
Joe Bossum, Bossum Farm, Tiverton
Steve Ostiguy, Church Community Housing Corp.
John Berg, The Nature Conservancy

The meeting began at 5:10 pm at the USDA, 60 Quaker Lane, Warwick.

Jason Pezzullo made a motion, seconded by Jim Opaluch, to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2006 meeting with amendment. The motion passed unanimously.

Kevin Nelson made a motion, seconded by Jim Opaluch, to approve the minutes of the February 9, 2006 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Ken Ayars and Jim Auckerman updated the Commission regarding the Fenner/Ricci project. There was discussion regarding the proposed boundary line between the easement and non-easement area around the existing houses, and the considerable quantity of old vehicles/equipment at the farm. Ken Ayars visited the site and the proposed boundary line is consistent with the existing fence line between the houses and fields, and conveyed to Fenners that any non-usable equipment and material must be removed from the easement area prior to closing, to which the Fenners agree. After discussion, Jim Opaluch made a motion to accept the original scoring for the Fenner/Ricci project, and require removal of all unusable equipment and materials prior to closing. The motion passed unanimously.

Joe Bossum and Steve Ostiguy presented information on the proposed project between Bossum and Church Community Housing Corporation (CCHC). CCHC proposes to purchase a major portion of the Bossum Farm and utilize for subsidized housing for artists, limited commercial farming, and also attempt to permanently protect the farm. Bossum previously applied to the Commission for development rights but was not accepted (not at the time in partnership with CCHC). The Bossum/CCHC potentially will enhance the agricultural values of the farm, and Bossum and CCHC plan to then re-apply to the Commission.

John Berg, TNC, discussed the status of the LeBreux Farm. LeBreux has signed a purchase and sale agreement, though there remain some continuing discussions about issues. The Commission has committed \$250,000 in funding, and USDA and the Nature Conservancy have also committed funds. John Berg and Ken Ayars will visit with LeBreux in the near future, and the goal is to close on the farm by mid-year.

Staff, USDA and TNC gave updates on other farms in negotiation.

Staff handed out applications for review and future scoring. Jim Opaluch made a motion, seconded by Jason Pezzullo, to re-evaluate the soils on the Albert Farm, Exeter (because of previous graveling on site). The motion passed unanimously.

The Commission discussed the proposed amendments to rules and regulations, and it was decided to have a special meeting specifically in this regard in late April.

The Commission discussed membership and proposed legislation in General Assembly concerning separation of powers which reconstitutes the membership of the Commission. Judy Bailey has also indicated her desire to resign after many years of faithful service. Jim Opaluch made a motion, seconded by Jason Pezzullo, to nominate Kevin Nelson for Vice Chairman. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kenneth D. Ayars, Chief
Division of Agriculture, RIDEM